

# Assessment and Reporting Issues 7–12

## Bulletin 3: Student self and peer assessment

### In this bulletin

What is self and peer assessment?	1
What are the benefits of self and peer assessment?	1
How does the self and peer assessment process begin?	2
What are the steps to successful self and peer assessment?	2-3
Examples of self and peer assessment	4-11

### What is self and peer assessment?

Student self and peer assessment are key processes in the learning cycle which enable students to develop a better understanding of themselves as learners. Self and peer assessment ensure that students are encouraged to reflect upon their learning by being involved in deciding on appropriate assessment methods, establishing clear assessment criteria and assessing their own and other students' achievement of task outcomes. It is through this process of critical reflection about their achievement that students develop the skills to become independent learners.

Student self and peer assessment are key processes in the learning cycle which encourage students to develop a better understanding of themselves as learners.

### What are the benefits of self and peer assessment?

Students typically have quite a good understanding of the assessment process from outside their school experiences. They have relied on this process to learn new skills or improve upon others. A student involved in learning to ride a skateboard, for example, will need to establish goals and clear criteria and then reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement. Students learn that in order to reach a certain standard, they must not only practise their skill but also risk temporarily failing to achieve their goal. This process of self assessment and drawing on feedback from others through peer assessment, plays a major role in improving their chances of reaching a desired goal.

In the school situation, teachers can maximise learning opportunities by involving students in the whole learning process. By making self and/or peer assessment integral to classroom practice, students not only master the content and clarify the learning as they develop tasks and criteria, but they also have an opportunity to take responsibility for critically reflecting upon their own learning and setting future goals.

### For teachers, student self assessment:

- provides an enriching teaching strategy that engages students in their learning
- gives further information in order to plan teaching and learning to meet individual student needs
- enables the targeting of realistic outcomes for students
- provides an insight into individual learning achievements
- gives information for evaluating teaching program.

### For students, self assessment:

- continues the learning cycle by making assessment integral to learning
- enables them to become aware of their strengths, and areas for improvement
- acknowledges their role as an active participant in the assessment process
- enables them to take responsibility for their learning and develop lifelong learning skills
- enhances the development of self esteem through a realistic perception of self worth
- enables the articulation of the criteria for assessment for parents and peers.

### For parents, student self assessment:

- assists them to see the benefit of making assessment integral to learning
- enables them to work collaboratively with their child toward achieving appropriate and attainable outcomes.

## How does the self and peer assessment process begin?

Planned assessment methods which are directly linked to intended learning outcomes and which involve students in all aspects of assessment, will have the potential for students to demonstrate their learning in the most effective manner.

A well designed task should provide students with a clear understanding of what they are expected to know, do and understand, and also the ways in which they will be assessed. Students benefit from being actively involved in this process as it assists them to target their learning and monitor their own progress. If students can successfully design assessment criteria, then they have at least demonstrated an understanding of expected task outcomes, requirements and criteria. When students are presented with a task, and proceed to complete it in a variety of possibly imaginative and stimulating ways but are then dependent on only the teacher for an evaluative mark or comment, the opportunity for much valuable learning could be lost.

## What are the steps to successful self and peer assessment?

### Step 1 Reflection

Students who are new to the process of self assessment need time to develop skills in reflecting on their own learning. Initially, teachers may ask students to reflect upon a piece of work that has recently been submitted. Students could respond to questions about their achievement in the task and the processes used by writing in a learning log, completing a structured evaluation sheet or by noting comments in their book. The following are just a few of the types of questions that may be asked.

#### Sample Reflection Questions

- \* What have you learned?
- \* What outcomes did you achieve?
- \* What do you know now about your topic that you didn't know before?
- \* What strategies did you use that worked best?
- \* How do you prefer to learn?
- \* What problems did you encounter and how were they solved?
- \* What would you do differently next time?
- \* What skill would you like to improve next time?
- \* Did you contribute significantly to group work?

### Step 2 Share and discuss the outcomes and design the task

A good way to begin the self assessment process is to model developing a task, its expected outcomes and assessment criteria on the board. This process initially requires a great deal of

teacher guidance and will take some time before students are proficient, however it ensures that students are clear about task requirements and how the task will be assessed.

In circumstances where the task and its marking criteria are developed collaboratively with students, teachers should first share and discuss the outcomes of the task. For example, "If these are the outcomes that you need to achieve, what could you do to show me you have achieved them?" Students may then suggest a variety of possibilities such as design a survey, write a report, create a video presentation or role play and so on. In this way students have had a role in designing the task and demonstrated that they fully understand the outcomes they are meant to achieve.

### Step 3 Develop the criteria

Sometimes, the teacher may have already planned the type of task and outcomes that students should achieve. Students could then be involved in the process of developing the assessment criteria for the task. On other occasions, the criteria may be developed by the teacher and then explained to students in depth. Whichever is the case, every student should be able to articulate the expectations of the task and the criteria that will be used to assess it. They will be less likely to use irrelevant criteria such as neatness or effort, which may not relate to the outcomes, in making decisions about achievement.

If, for example, a task for a Year 7 science class is to "Collect two articles relating to an area of science and present a speech explaining the articles", the lesson might flow as follows:

#### FIRST

Initial questions might be:

- \* What do you think you need to do in this task?
- \* What topics do you think you might look for? Where could you find articles?
- \* How could you present your work in an interesting way?

#### SECOND

For this task, I want you to do these things (outcomes):

- \* clearly explain how the articles relate to Science
- \* use scientific vocabulary correctly
- \* present information in oral form

#### THIRD

Introduce the term "criteria".

Ask questions such as:

- \* What do we mean by "clearly explain...."? What knowledge and skills will you be able to show as you complete this task? How will we know you have achieved these outcomes? or What should we look for when we assess your work?
- \* List these criteria on the board.

## FOURTH

Draw the following diagram on the board or overhead transparency.

Knowledge and skills outcomes	Achieved	Developing
<p><b>Clearly explain how the articles relate to Science</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>audience understand the Science</li> </ul> <p><b>Use scientific vocabulary correctly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>defines scientific words such as cloning</li> </ul> <p><b>Present information in oral form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speech should be 2 minutes long</li> <li>speak clearly so everyone can hear</li> <li>speech should be interesting</li> <li>make good eye contact with audience</li> </ul>		

Students will readily choose a preferred system to decide a level of achievement. Whatever method is used, it is important that students are clear about its definition.

Adapted from East Hills Girls Technology High School

In response to the questions, students may suggest the criteria listed in the table. In some cases, teachers will need to negotiate for fewer criteria and this may be achieved by asking students to prioritise their suggestions in terms of the criteria most relevant to the task outcomes.

When students are familiar with key terms such as outcomes and criteria, they could work in small groups to develop assessment tasks and/or criteria.

### Step 4 Explain assessment descriptors

Before students go through the process of self or peer assessment, they must also understand the way they will assess. There are numerous descriptors that may be used and students will often decide which they prefer. It is important that students are clear about what it means to be “developing, competent, excellent, poor or A - E” and so on. Teachers and students may need to consider faculty or whole school report formats when deciding on terms and definitions used.

The following are some of the descriptors that may be used.

- often, sometimes, rarely
- yes, no, sometimes
- developing, achieved
- developing, achieved, working beyond
- feel happy with, need help with
- high, medium, low
- bronze, silver, gold
- 1 2 3 4 5
- A B C D E

### Step 5 Assess the work

Once students have understood the outcomes they are to achieve, the task requirements, and have completed the task, they are ready to assess their own and each other's work. It is essential however, that the process of self and/or peer assessment occur immediately after a task is submitted for assessment. This process will take some time before students have developed the necessary skills. Remember that student and/or peer assessment does not imply that teacher judgement should be suspended. Rather it adds an extra dimension to the assessment process, a dimension that can empower and extend student learning.

### Some suggestions for assessing tasks

- Assessment may be a formal process where students assess their own and each other's work using a grid.
- All students may assess their own work but only a selection of their peers'.
- Tasks may be displayed around the room and students move around individually or in pairs to assess.
- Students may nominate a peer to assess their work.
- Students may write comments and not indicate any level of achievement.
- Self and/or peer assessment may take place through teacher led discussion without any formal written assessment. This would involve students responding to questions such as those suggested in the “Reflection” section of this bulletin.

### In summary

- Students need to recognise self and peer assessment methods as part of everyday learning. If not used effectively it can be regarded by students as a waste of time and of little value.
- Involve students in as much of the assessment process as possible.
- Students must be familiar with the requirements of each descriptor e.g. poor, developing, excellent.
- Display self and/or peer assessment sheets with a student's tasks.
- Students should be encouraged to comment on the agreed criteria.
- Use self and peer assessment to reflect on group performances.
- Remember that while this is an excellent way to enhance student learning, teachers should make the final judgement about student achievement.

An example of a  
History student  
reflection proforma

History	
<b>MY LEARNING GOALS</b>	<b>Name:</b> _____
	I believe I am good at the following skills in History: _____ _____
	I would like to practise the following skills in History: _____ _____
	I prefer to learn in the following ways: (tick the boxes which best apply to you)
	<input type="checkbox"/> finding out things for myself <input type="checkbox"/> working in small groups <input type="checkbox"/> working by myself <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes working by myself and sometimes working in groups <input type="checkbox"/> researching <input type="checkbox"/> developing my own assessment tasks with some help from my teacher <input type="checkbox"/> assessing my own work to find out how I can improve next time <input type="checkbox"/> listening to interesting information from the teacher/peer/guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> reading relevant material from books and other written sources <input type="checkbox"/> using hypercard or other programs on the computer <input type="checkbox"/> using visual material such as photographs/videos/objects <input type="checkbox"/> discussing topics in class <input type="checkbox"/> debating <input type="checkbox"/> doing or making things <input type="checkbox"/> reading novels or stories about the topic <input type="checkbox"/> drafting written work before publishing it
	Other? Please list below. _____ _____
I am interested in learning more about: _____ _____	
If I don't achieve my learning goals, the reason is usually because: _____ _____	
Student's signature _____	Teacher's signature _____ Date __/__/__

*Lucas Heights Community School*